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ABSTRACT

In order to assess the foreign language programs currently offered by Oakton Community College (OCC), a three-part investigation was undertaken in 1974. First, to examine grade distribution and drop-out rate, the records of students enrolled in language courses were compared with the records of the total student body. During the spring, summer and fall sessions of 1973, there was a much greater percentage of A grades awarded in language courses than in all college courses. The drop-out rate was, however, approximately the same. Second, the scores of German and Spanish language students on nationally administered language competency examinations was compared to the national norm. In all cases, OCC class averages exceeded national averages; this success is attributed to programmed instruction and small class size. Third, to assess student interest in language courses, a questionnaire was administered to all classes taught by full-time foreign language faculty. The only language not currently offered for which there appeared to be considerable committed student interest was Italian. Students additionally indicated an interest in taking courses in Latin American culture, advanced Spanish conversation, and French conversation. (Author/NHM)

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# FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM EVALUATION

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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This report deals with three subject areas concerning the foreign language program at Oakton Community College: how do foreign language program courses compare with all courses in terms of final grade distribution and drop rate; is there any evidence as to whether or not OCC language programs meet student academic needs; and, do OCC language programs meet student needs in terms of languages they wish to study? In this report language courses refers to all language courses combined, and all courses refers to all courses combined (including language courses).

## Grade Distribution and Drop-out Rate

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the comparison between language courses and all courses concerning grade distribution. What is apparent is that for all sessions in 1973 there was a much greater percentage of A grades awarded in the language courses than in all courses. The foreign language faculty suggests that this is perhaps due to the fact that (a) there are fairly set intradisciplinary criterion for mastery, and (b) that missing certain steps along the way can have particularly disastrous consequences because effectively dealing with step two often requires a mastery of step one. Consequently, there is a tendency for those who are successful to be quite successful and those who are unsuccessful to receive very low grades; producing a kind of bimodal grade distribution with peaks around very high and very low grades. The student who falls far behind often findshimself unable to remedythis deficit. But commensurate with the system at Oakton, whereby X grades are only recorded internally, he finds it in his interest to take an X and try to build on what foundation he has and go from there, rather than necessitate starting over again by withdrawing. This, incidentally, may be a reason for the large percentage of X grades generally awarded at Oakton,

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OCC GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR LANGUAGE COURSES AND ALL COURSES

Spring, Summer and Fall Sessions 1973

All figures expressed in percent.

| | GRADE | A | B | C | D | X | W | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPRING 1973 | Languages* | 53 | 17 | 8 | 1 | 12 | 0 | 13 |
| | All Courses | 25 | 26 | 18 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 15 |
| (All courses base) | Difference | +28 | -9 | -10 | -3 | +3 | -4 | -2 |

| | GRADE | A | B | C | D | X | W | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SUMMER 1973 | Languages* | 54 | 13 | 9 | 2 | 11 | 0 | 9 |
| | All Courses | 29 | 33 | 18 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 7 |
| (All courses base) | Difference | +25 | -20 | -9 | -2 | +5 | -2 | +2 |

| | GRADE | A | B | C | D | X | W | R |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FALL 1973 | Languages* | 47 | 35 | 5 | 1 | 15 | 2 | 18 |
| | All Courses | 22 | 26 | 20 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 17 |
| (All courses base) | Difference | +25 | +9 | -15 | -4 | +7 | -1 | +1 |

Table 1

*All language courses combined.

and for language classes particularly where the percentages of X grades awarded are slightly higher than for all courses.

Table 2 provides a comparison between initial seating and number of final grades awarded for language courses and all courses. The percentage differences are very small and of no immediate, apparent significance.

Student Academic Needs

Two primary criterion for evaluation of program effectiveness are: comparison with foreign language students at other colleges, and success in taking more advanced courses (particularly at other institutions).

There are comparative data available in terms of the Modern Language Association (MLA) Examination which was administered to the Spanish and German language students at the end of the Spring Semester 1973 (there were not enough qualified French language students to meaningfully administer the examination, but the Pinsleur Examination will be administered at the end of the current semester; this is a specialized examination for French language students). For German 102, 201 and 202, and Spanish 102, 201 and 202 (MLA Examination): in all cases OCC class averages exceeded the national averages for college students (all sub-scale scores combined).

| | Raw Scores | |
|---|---|---|
| | OCC | NAT |
| German | | |
| 102 | 158 | 153 |
| 201 | 155 | 153 |
| 202 | 169 | 153 |

| | Raw Scores | |
|---|---|---|
| | OCC | NAT |
| Spanish | | |
| 102 | 169* | 157 |
| 201 | 168* | 157 |
| 202[a] | 186** | 165 |

*Upper quartile 165
**Upper quartile 172

[a]Advanced level exam administered.

COMPARISON BETWEEN INITIAL SEATING AND NUMBER OF FINAL GRADES AWARDED:

FOR LANGUAGE COURSES AND ALL COURSES (1973)

| | | Initial Seating | Final Grades | Difference | Percentage Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPRING 1973 | Languages* | 163 | 166 | 3 | 2 |
| | All Courses | 9,315 | 8,887 | 428 | 5 |

| | | Initial Seating | Final Grades | Difference | Percentage Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SUMMER 1973 | Languages* | 52 | 53 | 1 | 2 |
| | All Courses | 2,823 | 2,764 | 59 | 2 |

| | | Initial Seating | Final Grades | Difference | Percentage Difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FALL 1973 | Languages* | 183 | 177 | 6 | 3 |
| | All Courses | 10,834 | 10,395 | 439 | 4 |

Table 2

*All language courses combined.

The foreign language faculty attributes this success in part to the use of programmed instruction and to small class size. It is probably also true that the foreign language faculty is talented and hard working and that this is an important factor.

There is currently no basis for assessing the success of our foreign language students who have transferred to other institutions. However, the University of Illinois at Urbana (a participant in the state-wide program of providing transfer student information) is being contacted in order to try to obtain an ongoing record of student progress by student by semester. Other follow-up methods are currently being considered, such as maintaining contact with individual students in order to determine their progress and possibly providing a basis for remedial assistance to transfer students from OCC when required.

Student Interests

As concerns students' interests, a questionaire (Appendix A) was devised to provide an initial measure of student interest in not currently offered languages and special language courses. It was adminstered in all classes (including night classes) taught by full time foreign language faculty. The questionaire results indicate interest in the following courses: cultural aspects of Latin American countries, advanced Spanish conversation, and French conversation. Those who indicated an interest in registering for another language (not currently offered) were asked (Appendix B) to decide whether their commitment was enough to permit preregistration for one or two of those languages in which they had shown initial interest. Results are shown in Table 3. The only language which appears to have considerable committed interest is Italian.

Summary

(1) Foreign language students at OCC receive a disproportionately high number of A grades compared with students in all courses, but (for German and Spanish students)

## RESULTS OF OCC LANGUAGE INTEREST SURVEY

Out of 133 language students 51 expressed interest in languages (one or more) other than those now offered at Oakton. (See Appendix A for form used).

Shown (below) are the languages suggested, and the numbers of students who showed interest in them:

A. Russian----- 7
B. Portugese--- 8
C. Hebrew------13
D. Latin-------12
E. Chinese----- 2
F. Yiddish----- 9
G. Polish------ 2
H. Italian-----26
I. Other
   - Arabic---- 1
   - Yugoslav-- 1
   - Greek----- 2
   - Swahili--- 1
   - Sanskrit-- 1

20 students showed a willingness to be preregistered for the following languages for either the Summer or Fall Session 1974. (See Appendix B for form used).

Portugese--- 2
Russian----- 2
Hebrew------ 1
Latin------- 3
Yiddish----- 1
Polish------ 1
Italian----- 9
Swahili----- 1

Of the 51 students expressing interest in coursework in other languages, 20 did not want to commit themselves to preregistration and 11 were absent on the day the follow-up forms were distributed.

Table 3

perform at a high level on nationally administered language competency examinations. (2) There is no current assessment of success of transfering (OCC) foreign language students, but the first steps for follow-up studies are now being implemented. (3) The only language not currently offered for which there appears to be considerable committed student interest is Italian. Students additionally indicate an interest in taking courses in Latin American culture, advanced Spanish conversation, and French conversation. (4) The drop rate for foreign language classes is approximately the same as for all courses.

Sheldon G. Kirshner, Ph.D., Director
Instructional Research & Evaluation
February 15, 1974

OCC LANGUAGE SURVEY

NAME _____ AGE _____ DATE _____

LANGUAGE _____ INSTRUCTOR _____ SECTION _____

MAJOR _____

1. Does this language represent your first college level language study? Yes ____

   No ____

   a. If it is your first college level language, what other language courses at a lower level, if any, do you have credit for and where did you take these courses.

   _____ _____

   _____ _____

   b. Would you have preferred to have enrolled in a language program other than this one, but which was not offered here at Oakton? Yes ____

   No ____.

   If so which language. _____

2. Does Oakton offer a language you are interested in but not advanced (or specialized) enough courses in that language? If so, what courses (list the larguage) would you like to see offered.

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. If Oakton were to offer courses in the following languages this summer or next fall, would you register for any of them? Check one if you would.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Russian | ____ | E. Chinese | ____ | I. Other | |
| B. Portugese | ____ | F. Yiddish | ____ | | |
| C. Hebrew | ____ | G. Polish | ____ | | _____ |
| D. Latin | ____ | H. Italian | ____ | | |

4. If this is a 102, 201, 202, or 205 class, please answer the following:

| Course | Grade Received | Instructor | When taken (Sem. or Sess. & year) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 101 | | | |
| 102 | | | |
| 201 | | | |
| 202 | | | |



SGK 1/74

OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
7900 NAGLE AVENUE, MORTON GROVE, ILLINOIS 60053 TELEPHONE (312) 967-5120

February 4, 1974

Dear Student:

You have indicated an interest in taking course work in the following languages for the coming Summer or Fall Sessions.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Since there is considerable amount of work and commitment involved in setting up a new language program we would like (you) to assess how interested you would be in taking courses in the languages you have checked. Do you feel enough of a commitment to let us preregister you for any of these language courses for the Summer or Fall Sessions? If so list the language (up to two languages) and the session.

_____ _____

_____ _____

Signature of student _____

These forms must be completed by Friday, February 8th and returned either to your instructor or to me (Room 141).

Thank you for helping us to try to provide better programs.

Sincerely,

Sheldon G. Kirshner, Ph.D., Director
Instructional Research & Evaluation

SGK:jmp

_____ (Student's name)